Joint Authority Support for Children, Families and Schools

Sensory Support Service Newsletter

www.bristol.gov.uk/sensory-support-service

Supporting children and young people with hearing loss, vision or multisensory impairment to have the best opportunities to learn, develop and grow.

November 2026

Welcome to the Sensory Support Service Newsletter

We hope you are all well and keeping warm.

As you are probably aware there are SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) reforms underway. There is no plan to change current provision for your children from the Sensory Support Service but there are developments that may change some processes, e.g. use of EHCPs and Individual Support Plans. The government announced that more information would be available early in 2027 and we will keep you informed of key changes once we know more.

See below for news, events etc. Thank you.

You can discuss any issues or concerns with your support teacher for Vision Impairment, (QTVI) Teacher of Deaf (ToD) or teacher for Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI). You can also contact us via our **Service Helpline**: sensorysupportservice@bristol.gov.uk

Parent representatives for our steering group

Thank you to all the parents who offered to be part of this group. We would still welcome a few more parents particularly those with older children (secondary and post 16).
The Steering Group meets to:

- Provide strategic direction to the running of the service
- Discuss updates and developments with the service
- Share information across services and partner organisations
- Make decisions about changes to the service
- Review the performance of the service

See what parents thought of their experience below and please let us know if you are interested in joining the group, by emailing: sensorysupportservice@bristol.gov.uk

Parent: "I have held a place as a parent/carer rep for several years which has been very enlightening. You get the chance to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by children and families, as well as the support they need and can put things into perspective from a family point of view. It's been quite rewarding to have some input on things that the service is aiming to achieve. I would encourage anyone that is thinking of applying, to do it! It is a small-time commitment that has some real impact and can help you to have a great understanding of the services that our children rely on."

1. Acorns Support Group

Acorns Early Years group is a specialist pre-school group that supports children 0 to 5 with hearing loss and their families, and is offered to those living in, Bristol, South Gloucester, North Somerset, Bath and North-East Somerset.

Timings: Wednesday mornings during term time from 10.30am to midday.

Venue: Elmfield House, Greystoke Avenue, Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol, BS10 6AY

The main Acorns group at Elmfield house includes:

- a children's creche for young children and babies with a hearing loss and their siblings, run by Specialist Teaching assistants and Sign Language Communication Advisers, who organise a range of activities and play experiences,
- a parents discussion group with visiting speakers including Speech and Language therapists, audiologists, Teachers of the Deaf and local charities as well as more relaxed coffee mornings,
- a buddy system, to welcome you to Acorns.

We also run some smaller groups (Little Acorns) once a month in Bath, Easton and Weston-Super-Mare. We hope to be able to reach more families in their local areas. These sessions are stay and play sessions and are open to all our families.

We work closely with the Family Centre for Deaf Children (FCDC) in all our Acorns activities and dates for Little Acorns can also be found on their events page.

Events for November 2026 – The Family Centre (Deaf Children)

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The FCDC also work with the service in providing support and funding for small groups of older children who are deaf or have hearing loss. This enables them to attend activities where they can meet and engage with new peers.

If you're nearby, you're warmly invited to come along to your local group — we'd love to see you there! For more information, please see our website: www.sensorysupportservice.org.uk

Bath Acorns

Address: **First Steps, Woodhouse Road, Twerton, Bath, BA2 1SY**

- Date: **10 December 2026**
- Time: **10.30am to midday**

For more information email julian.shepard@bristol.gov.uk

Easton Acorns

- Address: Bannerman Road Community Academy, All Hallows Road, BS5 0HR
- Time: 10.30am to midday

Date: **Monday 7 December 2026**

For more information email lucy.blatchford@bristol.gov.uk

Weston-Super-Mare Acorns

- Address: Mendip Green Primary School, Greenwood Road, Worle, Weston-Super-Mare BS22 6EX
- Time: 10:15am to 11:45am

Dates: **No session dates planned for remainder of 2026**

For more information email lydia.johnston@bristol.gov.uk

Hartcliffe Acorns

Address: Hartcliffe Children's Centre, Hareclive Road, Bristol, BS13 0JW

Time: 10.30am to Midday

Dates: **No further sessions planned for 2026**

For more information email lydia.johnston@bristol.gov.uk

4. Glue Ear talk for parents and carers

We are running a few sessions supported by Glue Ear Together, about finding out what glue ear is and why it is so common, understand signs and symptoms and learn about different interventions available. These sessions take place at Elmfield House.

- **Date: Tuesday 2 February 2027**
- **Time: 10.30am to midday**

Where: Elmfield House, Greystoke Avenue, Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol, BS10 6AY

Book your FREE place: sensorysupportservice@bristol.gov.uk

Have a chat with your Hearing Support Teacher to find out if this would be helpful for you. Families can also get in touch with the Service at any point to ask for our Glue Ear Information Pack to be sent to you.

5. Coffee and Connect

Parents and carers of deaf children are invited to join NDCS Community Connector Kayleigh Green, for a relaxed Coffee and Connect session on **Tuesday 24 November 2026, 10:00am to 11:30am** at **Starbucks, Eastgate Centre, Eastville, BS5 6XX**. Come along for a friendly chat, meet other families, and share experiences in an informal, supportive environment. No booking is required and families can drop in at any time during the session. Children are welcome to attend and remain the responsibility of their parent or carer throughout the session.

Please go to our Events tab for more session dates and contact details for Kayleigh.

6. Free Accredited BSL Level 1 Course

Parents and carers of deaf children aged 0 to 5 can apply for a limited number of free accredited British Sign Language (BSL) Level 1 course places through a partnership between RAD and the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS). This beginner-friendly course requires attendance at weekly sessions and commitment to the full programme. Places are limited, so families are encouraged to apply soon. Find out more and check eligibility via Free accredited BSL Level 1 courses.

7. NDCS Awareness Campaign

Learn more about National Deaf Children's Society's new mild and unilateral hearing loss awareness campaign, **'What you see, What you don't'**. The campaign launched on 14 October 2026 and aims to raise awareness of some of the less visible challenges children with mild or unilateral hearing loss can experience, as well as helping families find information and support.

You can find more information and resources here: What you see, what you don't.

8. Usher Kids UK: Free Online Webinars for Families

Usher Kids UK is hosting a series of free online webinars for young adults, parents, carers, and extended family members affected by Usher syndrome.

- **Research Update Special – Ush Chats**
  26 November, 8pm to 9pm
  A research-focused session for parents and carers, featuring updates from organisations involved in advancing Usher syndrome research in the UK and beyond.
  https://tinyurl.com/RegisterUshChats

- **It Takes a Village**
  1 December, 8pm to 9pm
  A session for grandparents, relatives, friends, and wider support networks to learn more about Usher syndrome and how they can help children and young people feel understood and included. All sessions are free and online. Families can find registration details here; Usher Kids UK - 'It Takes A Village'

9. Doctoral Thesis Participation Invitation

Research Opportunity for Deaf Young People and Families

Lydia Titcombe a Trainee Educational Psychologist at The University of Exeter is looking for deaf or hard of hearing young people aged 12-16 (Years 8-11) and their parents/carers to take part in a study exploring experiences of transitioning from mainstream primary to secondary school. The research involves interviews with young people and parents/carers and aims to improve understanding of this important stage of education. Please see attached poster with QR codes for further information. Families interested in taking part can also contact Lydia Titcombe at lt638@exeter.ac.uk for more information.

If you do not want to receive information, please let us know by emailing our generic email and telling us the name of your child sensorysupportservice@bristol.gov.uk

Joint Authority Support for Children, Families and Schools

Want more information on special educational needs and disability for the under 25s?

Find a link to the Local Offer for your area by following the link below

- Bristol
- South Gloucestershire
- Bath and North East Somerset
- North Somerset

General Data Protection Regulations as of 25/05/2018
The Local Authority (LA) uses data to carry out specific functions for which it is responsible, such as the assessment of special educational needs and/ or disabilities, home to school transport requirements, admissions, children/ young people's welfare, children looked after, exclusions and early years support. Anonymised information is used to derive statistics, to inform decisions on (for example) the funding of education settings, to assess educational performance and track Service provision.

The Sensory Support Service keeps information about your child so that we can provide services and to keep a record of these services. This information may include information that supports your child's development, monitor progress, specialist assessments and advice/support given to settings to enable them to meet your child's needs. This information will also include contact details, attendance information, characteristics such as ethnicity, special educational needs and any relevant medical information.

We will only request and share data with people already involved you're your child, people relevant to statutory duties and individual circumstances.

For information regarding data sharing, including retention periods, please visit Bristol City Council's privacy webpage.
If you wish to access the personal data held about you or a young person you are responsible for, please contact Bristol City Council in writing:

Data Protection Officer
Bristol City Council
PO Box 3176
Bristol
BS3 9FS